

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A gaming method wherein an array of symbols is displayed and an award is granted based on the displayed array of symbols, the method comprising:

5 displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols by a gaming machine, the array including at least one special symbol in a first position in the array;

receiving signals from a player initiating a second game;

10 shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array from the first position to a second position;

displaying in the second game an array of randomly selected symbols by the gaming machine, the array including the at least one special symbol in the second position in the array; and

15 granting any award to the player for the second game based upon the symbols displayed in the second game including the at least one special symbol.

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array from the first position to a second position comprises randomly shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array from the first position to a second position.

20 3. The method of Claim 1 wherein shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array from the first position to a second position comprises shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array in a predetermined manner from the first position to a second position.

25 4. The method of Claim 1 wherein displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols by a gaming machine comprises displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols by a gaming machine appearing on a plurality of virtual reel strips, the at least one special symbol being on at least one reel strip in a fixed position relative to other symbols on the reel strip.

5. The method of Claim 1 wherein displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols by a gaming machine comprises displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols by a gaming machine appearing on a plurality of virtual reel strips, wherein the at least one special symbol is not in a fixed position on a virtual reel strip.

6. The method of Claim 1 wherein displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols by a gaming machine comprises selecting the at least one special symbol to appear in the array based on a non-random event.

7. The method of Claim 1 wherein displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols by a gaming machine comprises displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols on a first screen by a gaming machine, and wherein displaying in the second game an array of randomly selected symbols by the gaming machine comprises displaying in the second game an array of randomly selected symbols on a second screen by the gaming machine

8. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:

after the second game, displaying an array of randomly selected symbols by the gaming machine for one or more additional games;

shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array after each game; and

granting an award to the player based upon the symbols displayed in the one or more additional games including the at least one special symbol.

9. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one special symbol comprises a plurality of special symbols.

10. The method of Claim 1 further comprising terminating the use of the at least one special symbol after the at least one special symbol is used in a winning combination of symbols.

11. The method of Claim 1 further comprising terminating the use of the at least one special symbol after a predetermined number of games.

12. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one special symbol has a wild card function.
13. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one special symbol is a high value symbol.
- 5 14. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one special symbol has a multiplier function.
15. The method of Claim 1 wherein the at least one special symbol triggers a bonus game.
16. The method of Claim 1 wherein the array of symbols is a 5x3 array.
- 10 17. The method of Claim 1 wherein granting an award comprises granting an award based on combinations of symbols across one or more pay lines.
18. The method of Claim 1 wherein the second game generates a new special symbol that is shifted in position along with the at least one special symbol in one or more additional games.
- 15 19. The method of Claim 1 wherein new special symbols are generated in one or more additional games and are randomly shifted in position during subsequent games.
20. A gaming device comprising:
- a display area for displaying a game, the game displaying an array of symbols, certain combinations of symbols across at least one pay line determining an award to a player; and
- 20 at least one processor for carrying out the following method:
- displaying in a first game an array of randomly selected symbols by a gaming machine, the array including at least one special symbol in a first position in the array;
- 25 receiving signals from a player initiating a second game;
- shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array from the first position to a second position;

displaying in the second game an array of randomly selected symbols by the gaming machine, the array including the at least one special symbol in the second position in the array; and

5 granting any award to the player for the second game based upon the symbols displayed in the second game including the at least one special symbol.

21. The device of Claim 20 wherein shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array from the first position to a second position comprises randomly shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array from the first
10 position to a second position.

22. The device of Claim 20 wherein the processor is further programmed to carry out the method comprising:

 after the second game, displaying an array of randomly selected symbols by the gaming machine for one or more additional games;

15 randomly shifting a position of the at least one special symbol in the array after each game; and

 granting an award to the player based upon the symbols displayed in the one or more additional games including the at least one special symbol.

23. The device of Claim 20 wherein the at least one special symbol comprises
20 a plurality of special symbols.

24. The device of Claim 20 further comprising terminating the use of the at least one special symbol after the at least one special symbol is used in a winning combination of symbols.

25. The device of Claim 20 wherein the at least one special symbol has a wild
25 card function.

26. The device of Claim 20 wherein the at least one special symbol is a high value symbol.

27. The device of Claim 20 wherein the at least one special symbol has a multiplier function.

28. The device of Claim 20 wherein the at least one special symbol triggers a bonus game.

5 29. The device of Claim 20 wherein the array of symbols is a 5x3 array.

30. The device of Claim 20 wherein granting an award comprises granting an award based on combinations of symbols across one or more pay lines.

31. The device of Claim 20 wherein the at least one special symbol is selected at random to be included in the array.

10